

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9-14, 24 and 25 remain in the application.

Applicant proposes to amend the application to refer to prior filed applications in order to claim the benefit thereof under 35 USC §120.

The omission to claim the benefit of these prior filed applications was inadvertent, and most of these were claimed in the parent application.

A petition to accept the delayed claim for priority is filed herewith.

Also enclosed is an Information Disclosure Form listing additional references cited in related applications including copending U.S. Serial No. 10/319,956 and 10/389,351.

An opposition is pending in the European Patent Office on a European Patent application corresponding to the parent of the present application. The Information Disclosure Statement also lists references cited in the course of that opposition.

Applicant believes these listed references are cumulative to the references already of record, but in the interests of completeness, wishes them to now be made of record.

Applicant does not concede that these references are all prior art as to the claims of the present invention.

By claiming the benefit of U.S. Serial No. 471,922, filed January 23, 1990, now U.S. Patent 5,217,244, among other prior filed applications, the teachings of U.S. 5,082,310 relied on by the Examining in rejecting claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9-14, 24 and 25 under 35 USC 103(a) are no longer available as prior art, since the relevant material shown in Figures 7 and 8 was contained in that application.

Thus, withdrawal of that rejection is respectfully requested.

Even aside from the status of 5,082,310 as prior art, it is not believed that that patent taken with Takamatsu et al. (4,246,213) and Proos et al. (5,335,935) taken together suggest the invention of claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9-14, 24 and 25.

These claims define a preweakened trim piece having a regular series of partial penetrations cut into the inside of the outer layer by a laser beam which is pulsed to produce the varying depth penetrations.

The present application has claimed the benefit of the prior filed application 07/471922, filed January 23, 1990 which disclosed the concept of a preweakened trim having a scoring comprised of a varying depth preweakening scoring cut into the inside of a cover layer of an air bag covering trim piece. This teaching predates Nanbu 5,060,971.

Applicant concedes that laser scoring of trim pieces per se has been taught in the prior art, but asserts that varying depth cutting was first disclosed in the prior filed applications mentioned, and that pulsating laser scoring to create partial perforations was first disclosed in the parent of the present application.

The regularly varied depth scoring when accomplished by pulsating operation of a laser beam has been found to reliably preweaken the trim piece without overweakening the cover layer so as to lead to cracking and externally visible lines. This is distinguished from a constant depth laser scoring which is difficult to be controlled to avoid either overweakening or underweakening of the trim piece. The laser scoring comprised of thicker regions interspersed with partial penetrations can much more easily achieve an adequate preweakening which does not overweaken the trim piece since the trim piece is not unduly weakened by the partial penetrations because of the presence of the intervening thicker area. Thus, the claimed scoring shape is not a mere matter of design choice but rather produces an important result not

appreciated by any of the prior art of record.

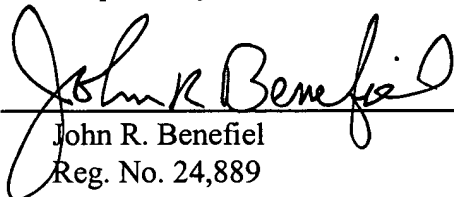
This is not taught by any of the references of record. Takamatsu et al. discloses only a constant depth scoring molded into the inside of the trim piece cover layer. This geometry has been found to be particularly effective when preweakening by a laser scoring as the criticality of maintaining an exact maximum depth is greatly alleviated.

Accordingly, it is respectfully urged that the claims cannot properly be deemed obvious under 35 USC 103(a) over the prior art of record.

Respectfully submitted,

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It is hereby certified that this correspondence, along with any items referred to as being attached or enclosed, is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on March 8, 2004.

By:

